

Message Text

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S E C R E T MANAGUA 0308

EXDIS

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TAGS: PFOR, PINS, MOPS, CU, AO, NU

SUBJECT: CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA

REF STATE 010646

FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY LEURS FROM AMBASSADOR THEBERGE

1. SUITABLY ABRIDGED VERSIONS OF SITREPS ON CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA ARE GIVEN TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA TO PROVIDE HIM WITH REQUESTED BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO HIM AND GON. IN SPEECH AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE FIRST CENTRAL AMERICAN CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTHS ON 17 JANUARY IN MANAGUA, HE MADE SOVIET-SUPPORTED CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA A MAJOR THEME. HE STRONGLY CRITICIZED CUBA'S VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF NONINTERVENTION, AND DESCRIBED CUBA AS A "DANGEROUS SOVIET SATELLITE."

2. IN RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA AND OTHER GON OFFICIALS, IT WAS EVIDENT TO ME THAT THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT CUBA IS AN INDEPENDENT MILITARY ACTOR IN ANGOLA, CAPABLE OF ORGANIZING, LAUNCHING AND SUPPLYING A MAJOR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WITHOUT DECISIVE SOVIET ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT. CUBA IS WIDELY PERCEIVED

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IN NICARAGUA, IN INFORMED OFFICIAL AND NONOFFICIAL CIRCLES, AS

ACTING AS MOSCOW'S PROXY IN ANGOLA, SUPPORTING AFRICAN POLICY OF THE SOVIET UNION, AND DANGEROUS ONLY BECAUSE OF SOVIET BACKING AND APPARENT INABILITY OF UNITED STATES TO ACT AS CREDIBLE COUNTER-FORCE TO THE USSR.

3. IT MAY BE OF SOME INTEREST TO NOTE THAT THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL AMERICAN AFFAIRS IN THE GUATEMALAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, AT A LUNCH HELD LAST FRIDAY BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER IN ANTIGUA IN HONOR OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS, TOLD ME THAT CUBA COULD NOT POSSIBLE BE UNDERTAKING SUCH A DISTANT OVERSEAS VENTURE ALONE. HE EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN ABOUT INTERVENTION IN AFRICA WHERE NO IMPORTANT CUBAN INTERESTS WERE INVOLVED, AND FELT THAT CASTRO WAS REPAYING HIS POLITICAL DEBT TO THE USSR.

4. COMMENT: ON SUBJECT OF CUBA'S RELATIONS WITH USSR, NICARAGUAN POLITICAL ELITES GENERALLY VIEW CUBA AS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ECONOMICAL- LY AND MILITARILY ON MOSCOW. THEY DO NOT PERCEIVE CUBA AS AN INDEPENDENT MILITARY ACTOR IN ANGOLA, CHALLENGING THE UNITED STATES. THERE IS NO IMAGE OF CUBAN DAVID VERSUS AMERICAN GOLIATH, AND I DOUBT THAT ANY SERIOUS LATIN LEADER VIEWS CUBA'S MILITARY ADVENTURE IN ANGOLA THAT WAY. CUBAN INTERVENTION IS PERCEIVED AS A SOVIET CHALLENGE TO THE UNITED STATES IN WHICH CUBA IS ACTING AS MOSCOW'S MERCENARY FORCE. BEHIND CUBA, THEY SEE THE POWERFUL HAND OF THE USSR, WHICH IS WHAT CAUSES CONCERN. THEBERGE

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